

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #0485/01 1421247
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 221247Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3512
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6817
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4539
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3166
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7683
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1763
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5095
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1301
RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7426

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000485

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: North Lebanon Clashes, Mouallem, Jafaari, Palestinian
Territories (5/22)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on May 22 continued to report on clashes
in Naher al-Bared refugee camp in north Lebanon.

All papers also featured a lecture at Damascus University by FM
Mouallem on May 21 praising Syria's foreign policy under President
Asad's leadership, saying that "US pressures and attempts to isolate
Syria, since the occupation of Iraq, have failed, thanks to the
national cohesion in Syria and the people's support of their
Leader." He emphasized that dialogue with the US must cover
regional issues in order to achieve security and stability here.

On the peace process, the Minister stressed that Israel has no
desire for peace, and that "the liberation of the Golan remains at
the top of Syria's defense and political priorities."

Regarding Iraq, the Foreign Minister said the solution has to be
political, must preserve the country's territorial integrity and
independence, and must set a timetable for withdrawal of foreign
troops.

On the Palestinian issue, the Minister reiterated Syria's continuous
efforts to stop Palestinian civil strife.

As for Lebanon, Mouallem renewed Syria's support for what the
Lebanese agree upon, pointing out the importance of Lebanon's
stability and security for Syria, and saying that "the only way to
achieve this goal is through Lebanese national dialogue and
formation of a national government." On the international tribunal,
the Minister said "the aim of this tribunal under Chapter 7 is to
subjugate every country that opposes US hegemony." Regarding the
latest events in Lebanon, FM Mouallem made it clear that the
so-called "Fatah al-Islam" is an outlawed group whose militants are
pursued in Syria and whose activities do not serve the Palestinian
cause.

Independent al-Watan cited a statement by Bashar al-Jaafari, Syria's
Ambassador to the UN, denying any Syrian linkage with Fatah al-Islam
and linking violence in Lebanon to the UN Security Council vote on
the International Tribunal. Al-Jaafari said that "every time the UN
Security Council is scheduled to meet to deal with the Lebanon
crisis, there is some kind of trouble, like a bombing, assassination
or assassination attempt one or two days earlier." He added that

"some people are trying to pressure the UNSC members to adopt the US-British-French draft resolution on the International Tribunal."

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Clashes between the Lebanese army and the Fatah al-Islam group continue. Assaults in Nahr el-Bared, Ashrafieh and Verdun raise questions about their timing on the eve of UNSC vote on the International Tribunal" (Independent al-Watan, 5/22)

"FM Mouallem: The International Tribunal is one of the US policy's tools to subjugate Syria and the region. The Fatah al-Islam organization is an outlawed organization that does not serve the Palestinian cause" (Independent al-Watan, 5/22)

"Syria's Ambassador to the UN, al-Jaafari, links violence in Lebanon to vote on the International Tribunal at the UN Security Council" (Independent al-Watan, 5/22)

"Jaafari: There is anxiety at the UN Security Council about a hasty resolution on the International Tribunal" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/22)

"Gaza buried its martyrs yesterday. Israel threatens to liquidate Mishal and Hanieh. France denounces Palestinian missile-firing and calls on Israel to practice self-restraint" (Independent al-Watan, 5/22)

"Former US president Jimmy Carter calls for holding dialogue with Iran and Syria in accordance with the Baker-Hamilton recommendations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/22)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Horizons of US Dispute"

Muhammad Khair al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/22): "The debate between Democrats and Republicans, which at the beginning was aimed at correcting mistakes of the current US Administration and reformulating America's relations with the world and the Middle East free from the logic of force and the policy of threats, has now turned into merely an electoral battle in preparation for the presidential election, which will be held more than two years from now. This makes this debate useless as far as the situation in Iraq and the American predicament in that country are concerned....

"For this debate to open onto positive horizons accelerating the end of the American occupation of Iraq and helping the United States come out of its crisis and its successive repercussions there, Iraqis have no option but to continue with their resistance and to increase the losses among occupation soldiers.... Americans have no option but to expose the policy of lies that their administration is pursuing and on which it built the failed war plan in Iraq, and to remove President Bush before he completes his term in office in light of the damage and harm his policy has caused to the interests, economy, reputation, and credibility of the United States...."

"They Are Not Regretful"

As'ad Abbud, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/22): "During his last visit to Baghdad, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that he did not regret the war on Iraq....

"Instead of offering an expression of sorrow, a small apology, or a tear for those who are killed daily in Iraq, Blair announced in

Baghdad that he does not regret participating in the major historical crime of invading Iraq....

"Mr. Blair, we did not expect you to express regret. If there were any capacity for you to regret, you would not have committed what you have committed. The crime of destroying Iraq was committed in cold blood. Maybe you did not draw up its scenes, but you were certainly an accomplice. Your regret will not do you any good before history.... It has already damned those who destroyed this country with gunpowder, fire, and hatred, hatred toward Arab history, Arab civilization, and Arabs and Muslims...."

Corbin